"We are all sinners, son. Before the war, with the aid of St. Innokenty, we could make ends meet, but since the yellow pagan opened his damned shop, we cannot live on miracles. The Lord sees everything and will forgive our sins."

The yellow pagan to whom he referred was a Chinese lama—a tall, very lean man with an emaciated, deeply tanned face and sparse gray hair around his bald head. He practiced medicine in an office close to Stepanida's house, so that I could observe his technique.

His aides, all in long yellow robes, would line up the visitors in the waiting room. Then the lama, dressed in a shining golden gown, would emerge from behind the partition with a long iron arrow in his hand. Facing a patient, he would ask:

"What ails you?"

The patient would point to his head, back, or stomach. The lama, humming an incantation, would touch the sore spot with the arrow and proceed to the next patient.

Pilgrims who swarmed to the sepulcher of St. Innokenty used to stop at the office of the lama as well and divided their donations between the monastery and the "yellow pagan." The monastery's efforts to remove the competition were futile. The lama had influential supporters in Irkutsk, including the wife of the Governor, and the Jilkino police were instructed not to interfere with the activities of the "Chinese doctor." In justice, it must be pointed out that neither did it interfere with the monastery's sale of liquors to nocturnal guests.

ON THIN ICE

The first Sunday after my arrival at Jilkino, I went to Irkutsk. A marvelous two-mile walk along the bank of the Angara, a fascinating ferry crossing, and I was in the city. I had the address of an S-D lawyer, and he and his wife received me with great friendliness. Half an hour later Rozhkov arrived, as buoyant as ever, bristling with journalistic plans. After dusk I returned to Jilkino with a bundle of books and magazines. I spent my days reading and hiking along the Angara.

My next trip to Irkutsk fell on Christmas Eve. The crossing was rough. Pieces of ice were floating in the river, knocking against the ferry. This time I met more people—political exiles and local intellectuals. The lawyer and his wife did not let me return to Jilkino that night, and I slept on the sofa in their living room.

Next morning I went to the ferry landing. The river was wrapped in fog. Two policemen posted at the pier stopped me. "No crossing